

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /055 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4330

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 24788

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: FR, PINT

SUBJ: PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE, AUGUST 25.

REF: EMBTEL 24730

1. FRENCH PRESIDENT VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING WENT ON TV AT 8:00 O'CLOCK THIS EVENING TO ANSWER PRESS QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE RESIGNATION OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER JACQUES CHIRAC AND THE APPOINTMENT OF HIS SUCCESSOR RAYMOND BARRE. FOLLOWING IS AN EMBASSY PRECIS OF GISCARD'S PRESS CONFERENCE.

2. THE PRESIDENT OPENED THE PRESS CONFERENCE BY DECLARING THAT THE RESIGNATION OF JACQUES CHIRAC WAS NOT A DRAMATIC EVENT BECAUSE IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES GOVERNMENTS REGULARLY CHANGE. HE REFERRED TO A REMARK MADE BY THE NEWLY APPOINTED PRIME MINISTER, RAYMOND BARRE, THAT HE (BARRE) WOULD BE A PRIME MINISTER IN THE QTE PLENTITUDE OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THAT OFFICE ENDQTE.

3. ONE OF THE JOURNALISTS STATING THAT THE FRENCHMEN DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE HARSHNESS OF JACQUES CHIRAC'S RESIGNATION COMMENTS, ASKED THE PRESIDENT TO EXPLAIN WHAT WAS GOING ON. THE PRESIDENT ANSWERED BY DECLARING THAT CHIRAC WANTED TO LEAVE AND THAT HIS DEPARTURE WAS UNCLASSIFIED

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FULLY IN ACCORD WITH THE SPIRIT OF ARTICLE 8 OF THE

CONSTITUTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, CONTINUED GISCARD, THE PRIME MINISTER HAD HIMSELF EXPRESSED THE DESIRE FOR INCREASED POWERS. GISCARD STATED THAT HE REREAD DEGAULLE'S MEMOIRS, IN WHICH IT WAS CLEARLY EXPLAINED THAT THE PRIME MINISTER CARRIES OUT GOVERNMENT POLICY BUT DOES NOT MAKE IT.

4. WHEN ASKED WHY HE ACCEPTED CHIRAC'S RESIGNATION, THE PRESIDENT GAVE THREE ANSWERS:

A. BECAUSE CHIRAC REQUESTED HIS RESIGNATION,
B. BECAUSE DURING THE LAST WEEK IN JUNE, AT THE TIME OF PARLIAMENTARY TROUBLES OVER THE PROPOSED CAPITAL GAINS TAX REFORMS, INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL PARTIES APPEARED TO BE INDUCING UNDUE INFLUENCE ON GOF, AND THAT THE PRESIDENT DID NOT BRING ABOUT A CABINET CHANGE AT THE TIME BECAUSE IT WOULD LOOK AS IF THE PARTIES WERE RUNNING FRANCE INSTEAD OF THE ELYSEE (IN LATE JUNE RUMORS WERE RIFE OF A MINISTERIAL SHAKEUP).

C. BECAUSE STAGE ONE IN GISCARD'S BROAD POLICY OF REFORMS HAD BEEN COMPLETED AND STAGE TWO WAS NOW BEGINNING, THEREFORE IT WAS LOGICAL THAT A NEW TEAM SHOULD BE IN PLACE.

5. AT THIS POINT THE PRESIDENT, DENYING THE ASSERTION THAT POLITICAL LIFE IS FULL OF INGRATITUDE, THANKED HIS FORMER CABINET FOR THEIR DEVOTED AND EFFICIENT SERVICE. TWICE DURING HIS CONFERENCE THE PRESIDENT ALSO THANKED CHIRAC FOR HIS LOYALTY AND SERVICE.

6. ONE OF THE JOURNALISTS THEN ASKED WHY THE PRESIDENT HAD CHOSEN BARRE. GISCARD ANSWERED BY SAYING THAT IN THE FIRST PLACE BARRE, AS THE OUTSTANDING FRENCH ECONOMIST, WAS THE IDEAL MAN TO RESOLVE FRANCE'S CHRONIC PROBLEMS OF INFLATION AND MONETARY INSTABILITY. SECONDLY, THAT BARRE WAS A QTE PUBLIC FIGURE ENDQTE WHO HAD LONG BEEN IN PUBLIC SERVICE; AND LASTLY, THAT BARRE, WHO WAS NAMED TO THE POST OF MINISTER FOR FOREIGN TRADE IN THE JANUARY CABINET RESHUFFLE, HAS HAD EIGHT MONTHS WITH WHICH TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF INTO THE PROBLEMS OF

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GOVERNING IN FRANCE. THE PRESIDENT CONCLUDED BY EXPRESSING HIS HOPE THAT BARRE WOULD HAVE RELATIONS WITH ALL POLITICAL PARTIES IN FRANCE.

7. IN ANSWER TO ANOTHER QUESTION THE PRESIDENT SAID BARRE WOULD NAME HIS NEW GOVERNMENT ON THE EVENING OF FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, AND THAT THE FIRST FULL CABINET MEETING WOULD TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 28. THE

MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE:

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4331

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A. TO FIGHT INFLATION,

B. TO ASSURE THE SECURITY OF FRENCHMEN IN THE
MODERN WORLD,

C. TO CARRY OUT NEEDED REFORMS (WITH THE IMMEDIATE
ACCENT BEING LAID ON FAMILIES AND THE AGED).

8. BUT IN VIEW OF CHIRAC'S RESIGNATION, WHO WILL BE YOUR
NEW MAJORITY, ASKED ONE OF THE JOURNALISTS. WHO WILL
VOTE THE BUDGET THIS FALL? GISCARD REPLIED BY SAYING
THAT THE JOURNALIST WAS SPEAKING OF A PARLIAMENTARY
MAJORITY WHEREAS HE, GISCARD, WAS MORE CONCERNED WITH
THE MAJORITY OF FRENCHMEN, THE QTE ASSEMBLEE DU PEUPLE
ENDQTE WHO SUPPORT GOF'S PROJECTS. IN A REMARK THAT
CLEARLY DELINEATES THE DIRECTION GISCARD INTENDS TO GO
IN THE FUTURE, HE SAID THAT HE WOULD BROADEN (HIS
MAJORITY) TOWARD THE CENTER-LEFT, AND THAT BARRE WOULD
ASSIST IN THE CARRYING OUT OF THE ENDEAVOR. GISCARD
SAID THAT FRANCE CANNOT BE GOVERNED WITH A 5L PERCENT
TO 49 PERCENT MAJORITY, BUT HASTENED TO INCLUDE THAT AS
FAR AS THE PRESENT MAJORITY WAS CONCERNED, HE INTENDED
AN ADDITION TO THAT MAJORITY AND NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR

EXISTING ELEMENTS ALREADY THEREIN (BY EXISTING ELEMENTS
READ UDR). THE PRESIDENT FEELS THAT HAVING A POLITICALLY
NON-ENGAGED PRIME MINISTER WILL RENDER THE FRENCH
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POLITICAL WORLD MORE SERENE AND WILL MAKE EASIER THE
TASK OF EXPLAINING GOF POLICIES TO FRENCHMEN.

9. A JOURNALIST ASKED THE PRESIDENT WHETHER LEGISLATIVE
ELECTIONS WOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE NOW SCHEDULED DATE
OF SPRING 1978. THE PRESIDENT REPLIED WITH AN EMPHATIC
NO. HE CLOSED WITH THE THEME THAT FRANCE, BY FIGHTING
INFLATION, WOULD GET BACK WITH ECONOMIC BIG LEAGUERS
LIKE THE UNITED STATES, THE FRG AND JAPAN.

10. EMBASSY COMMENT: POST ANALYSIS OF THIS SPEECH WILL
BE CABLED SHORTLY. THE THREE MOST SIGNIFICANT POINTS
MADE BY THE PRESIDENT ARE THE DECLARED WAR ON INFLATION,
THE FACT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WILL CARRY OUT, NOT
MAKE, GOF POLICY, AND GISCARD'S DECLARED INTENTION TO
BROADEN HIS MAJORITY TOWARD THE CENTER-LEFT.
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